

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 17 are pending in the application. Claim 1 is an independent claim with claims 2 through 10 depending therefrom. Claim 11 is an independent claim with claims 12 through 17 depending therefrom.

Claims 1 through 4, 6, 9, and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by the UK '659 reference. Claims 11 through 17 stand rejected under §102(b) as anticipated by the U.S. Published Application No. 2002/0077618 to Molas. Claims 5, 7, and 8 stand rejected as obvious under § 103(a) in view of the UK '659 reference and Molas '618 publication.

Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims as amended and presented herein patentably distinguish over the cited references and are allowable for at least the reasons discussed below.

Claim 1 of the present application calls for the absorbent article to include a pad component. The pad component in turn includes a liquid permeable top cover, a liquid impermeable baffle, and an absorbent structure disposed between the top cover and the baffle. Wing portions extend laterally outward from the lateral sides of the pad component and have dimensions so as to wrap at least partially around the crotch portion of the user's undergarment. The wing portions extend longitudinally along both sides of a transverse centerline of the pad and are asymmetric in shape. The overlap region of the wing portions is disposed completely forward of the transverse centerline of the pad. As discussed at page 11 of the specification, this unique configuration of the wing portions provides distinct advantages to an absorbent pad in accordance with

claim 1. The UK '659 reference does not disclose an absorbent article with the limitations set forth in claim 1.

Referring to the UK '659 reference, it appears that the sole relevant embodiment disclosed within the reference is the embodiment of Fig. 26. This is the only embodiment disclosed in the reference having wing portions with an asymmetric shape that extend longitudinally along both sides of a transverse centerline of the pad. The description related to the embodiment of Fig. 26 at page 21 of the reference simply describes that the fixing elements 17c partially overlap with one another, and is silent as to any relative position of the overlap regions with respect to a transverse centerline of the pad. However, it is clear from Fig. 26 that the overlap region of fixing elements 17c is not completely forward of a transverse centerline of the pad, but extends on both sides of such a transverse centerline. To interpret the reference and figures in any other manner would be the result of hindsight analysis based on the present application. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 of the present application is not anticipated by the UK '659 reference.

Claims 2 through 10 only further patentably define the invention of claim 1 and are allowable for at least the reasons claim 1 is allowable. Additionally, various limitations of the dependent claims are not found in the UK '659 reference. For example, claim 3 calls for the overlap regions of the protective wing portions to be disposed at a forwardmost portion of the wing portions. Referring to Fig. 26, the overlap portions 17c are not disposed at the forwardmost portion of the wings, but are essentially intermediate of the wing structures. Claim 4 calls for the wing portions to have a forwardmost edge that extends perpendicular from the lateral sides of the pad

and defines the overlap regions. This structure is obviously not present in Fig. 26 of the UK '659 reference.

Claim 6 of the present application calls for the wing portions to be foldable along laterally inboard fold lines that are variably positionable relative to the pad lateral sides while maintaining an overlapping relationship between the overlap regions that is completely forward of the transverse centerline of the pad. There is no configuration of the pad according to Fig. 26 of the UK '209 reference that can be folded in this manner.

Independent claim 11 of the present application, as amended and presented herein, calls for the absorbent article to have a pad component that includes a top cover, a baffle, and an absorbent structure disposed between the top cover and the baffle. The article includes wing portions that extend laterally outboard from the lateral sides of the pad component. The wing portions extend longitudinally on both sides of a transverse centerline of the pad and have overlap regions that are disposed at a forward position entirely on one side of the transverse centerline. The wing portions have dimensions so as to be foldable along a plurality of laterally inboard fold lines that angle away from the lateral sides of the pad from a forwardmost point of the fold lines to a rearwardmost point of the fold lines. In a maximum angled position of the fold lines, the overlap regions are maintained at least partially overlapping and entirely on one side of the transverse centerline. It is respectfully submitted that this unique combination of structural features is not present in the absorbent pad according to the Molas '618 publication.

The Molas '618 publication describes an absorbent pad structure that does not have wing portions. The entire pad structure, including the liner, baffle, and absorbent

core extend completely to the longitudinal edges of the pad. A line 2 is embossed in the pad simply as a folding line. The line 2 separates a central area of the pad 3 from side areas 4 and 5. However, it is important to understand that the side areas 4 and 5 include the complete pad structure. Claim 11 of the present application calls for wing portions to extend laterally outboard from the lateral sides of the pad component. In the Molas '618 configuration, the side areas 4 and 5 are part of the pad component, and do not extend laterally outboard from lateral sides of a pad component.

Even if the side regions 4, 5 of the pad according to Molas '618 are considered as “wing portions” in the configuration wherein the sides are folded along line 2, such configuration is still not in accordance with claim 11. Claim 11 calls for the wing portions to comprise laterally outboard regions that overlap in the folded configuration of the wing portions. There is no disclosure in Molas '618 that the side regions 4 and 5 have dimensions so as to overlap when folded along line 2. Also, claim 11 calls for the wing portions to have dimensions so as to be foldable along a plurality of laterally inboard fold lines that angle away from the pad lateral sides from a forwardmost point of the fold lines to a rearwardmost point of the fold lines such that the overlap regions are maintained at least partially overlapping. Referring to Figs. 1 or 2 of Molas '618, it should be understood that the side regions 4 and 5 are folded at the embossed line 2. Even if the embossed line 2 defines the lateral sides of the “pad component” (central region 3), the side regions 4 and 5 do not include any other fold lines that are laterally offset relative to the fold line 2. Even if one were to attempt to fold the pad at a fold line other than the embossed line 2, such arbitrary fold line would still define the lateral sides

of the pad component. There would not be another fold line laterally outboard of this “new” fold line.

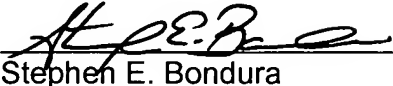
It is thus respectfully submitted that Molas '618 discloses an absorbent pad structure that may be folded at an embossed fold line to change the dimensions of the pad for different types of undergarments. The publication does not describe an absorbent article having an absorbent pad component with wing portions that extend laterally outward from the lateral sides of a pad component. In fact, Molas '618 intentionally distinguishes its structure from an absorbent article having conventional “winged” portions, as set forth in paragraph 35 of the reference.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 11 defines over Molas '618 and is allowable. Claims 12 through 17 only further patentably define the invention of claim 11 and are thus also allowable.

With the present Amendment, applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are allowable over the cited art of record, and that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable action thereon is respectfully requested. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at her convenience to resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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